

SENATE RESOLUTION 152

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to recognize Betty Asha for her remarkable achievements in life and commend her for her heroic efforts in South Sudan.

WHEREAS, we are honored to recognize an outstanding individual whose strength and determination led her to overcome seemingly insurmountable barriers and save her own life and the lives of many others; and

WHEREAS, Betty Asha, a South Sudan native, refused to become a casualty of her country's civil war; filled with a thirst for knowledge, Ms. Asha sought to better her life with education, and in her quest to achieve that education, she also helped more than 2,000 other Sudanese escape the fighting; and

WHEREAS, born into the Kawka tribe, Ms. Asha overcame significant hardship as a youth in South Sudan; after refusing marriage to a member of her tribe many years her senior, she was tortured and cast out by tribal elders; and

WHEREAS, with the encouragement and help of an American missionary, Chris Hurley of Blount County, Ms. Asha obtained her high school diploma and set her sights on continuing her education at Maryville College; during the time it took to acquire the necessary documentation, she moved to Uganda, where she completed a couple of courses; and

WHEREAS, while Ms. Asha lived in Uganda, civil war displaced nearly four million people and led to an estimated 400,000 deaths; these events led Ms. Asha to seek support from Mr. Hurley to rescue another young orphan from South Sudan into the safety of United Nations refugee camps in Uganda; and

WHEREAS, with financial support, Ms. Asha was able to procure several modes of transportation to assist South Sudanese refugees in their flight to safety; over a thirty-day period

in the summer of 2016, Ms. Asha's efforts brought nearly 2,300 refugees to safety, including her mother and five siblings, in addition to some of the villagers who tortured her as a girl; and

WHEREAS, her heroic efforts further motivated her advocates in the United States, including Mr. Hurley's fellow congregants at first United Methodist Church in Maryville, to help Ms. Asha realize her dream to attend Maryville College; and

WHEREAS, as a student at Maryville College today, Ms. Asha is pursuing a dual major in international business and political science; after completing her undergraduate degree, she hopes to attend law school or graduate school, with the eventual goal of returning home to South Sudan to help her people; and

WHEREAS, during the 2022 session of the One Hundred Twelfth General Assembly, Ms. Asha brought her many abilities and singular expertise to Capitol Hill to serve as an intern for Senator Raumesh Akbari to further her studies and learn more about Tennessee State government; and

WHEREAS, Betty Asha's extraordinary accomplishments in the face of adversity and her life-saving actions in the midst of civil unrest are an inspiration to us all, and we are proud to honor her; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby recognize Betty Asha for her many remarkable achievements, commend her for her heroic efforts in South Sudan, and extend to her our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.